In the week of Armed Forces Day:
LPT named one of first ‘Veteran Aware’ mental health Trusts in UK

Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) has become one of the country’s first mental health Trusts granted formal ‘Veteran Aware’ accreditation.

The announcement, recognising the Trust’s commitment to improving NHS care for serving and ex-service personnel and reservists, comes as residents across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland prepare to mark Armed Forces Day on Saturday (29 June).
LPT is now one of just two mental health Trusts* and a total of 36 NHS Trusts in the UK awarded the Veteran Aware mark by the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA). It highlights NHS Trusts that have made a series of pledges, such as ensuring members of the Armed Forces community are never disadvantaged when receiving care, training staff on veteran-specific needs, and supporting the Armed Forces as an employer.

It comes two years after the Trust made an official pledge to support Armed Forces personnel past and present, by signing the Armed Forces Covenant and a year after gaining Silver Armed Forces Covenant status.

LPT chief executive Dr Peter Miller, who signed the Armed Forces Covenant on behalf of the Trust in June 2017, said: “We are proud to show our commitment to supporting veterans, both as a healthcare provider and as an employer and it’s timely that we have received Veteran Aware accreditation in the lead up to Armed Forces Day.

“We see this as a major milestone in our continued commitment to support our military communities across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland."

Veteran Brendan Daly, Armed Forces lead for LPT added: "We know that people’s military experiences can often lead to challenges when they return to civilian life and LPT is committed to ensure the mental health of veterans is taken seriously.

“This accreditation reflects our continued commitment that any veteran known to our services will receive timely and appropriate health care and should not suffer in silence. When a veteran declares their status to us we will do all we can to support their physical and mental wellbeing, including signposting them to appropriate services and organisations.”

Professor Professor Tim Briggs CBE, chair of NHS Improvement’s Getting It Right First Time, NHS national director for clinical improvement and chair of the VCHA, commented: “Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust has made great strides in improving the care it provides to the servicemen and women of this country, and should be very proud. It is very fitting to mark Armed Forces Day by welcoming it as one of three more Trusts to the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance.”
The VCHA is working with NHS Trusts across the country to improve standards of care for the Armed Forces community and aims to have 75 providers accredited by the end of the year.

*The only other mental health Trust with Veteran Aware status, also awarded in this phase, is Sussex Partnership NHS Trust.

**Picture captions:** Top (LPT chief executive Dr Peter Miller (second from right) marks the Trust's Veteran Aware status with (left to right) Jennie Palmer-Vine, LPT’s Armed Forces clinical lead, Rob Melling, head of community development and veteran Brendan Daley, Armed Forces lead for the Trust.

Bottom: Dr Peter Miller, Brendan Daley and Jennie Palmer-Vines showcase the Veteran Aware kitemark

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**NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) provides community health, mental health and learning disabilities services for the one million people living in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. We have a budget in excess of £275 million and employ approximately 5,500 staff. For more information visit: www.leicspart.nhs.uk

2. Raising Health is our registered charity (number 1057361) which raises funds to support LPT’s excellent care initiatives, equipment and innovations which go above and beyond core NHS provision, to enhance the experience of our patients, service users and staff. www.raisinghealth.org.uk

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The Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA) is a group of NHS acute hospitals which have volunteered to be exemplars of the best care for veterans and help to drive improvements in NHS care for people who serve or have served in the UK armed forces and their families. The VCHA will also link hospitals to the Armed Forces charities, which provide rehabilitation services and resources for veterans. When fully utilised, these services will enhance the recovery pathway for veterans in NHS hospitals. It will also help deliver NHS England and NHS Improvement's objectives to highlight unwarranted clinical variation in hospital quality and efficiency.

The VCHA was inspired by the heroism of Captain Noel Godfrey Chavasse VC and Bar, a doctor who gave his life rescuing men on the battlefields of the First World War. In 2014, leading orthopaedic surgeon Prof. Tim Briggs CBE wrote The Chavasse Report on improving Armed Forces and veteran care while raising NHS standards, which recommended establishing a support network of hospitals. The resulting VCHA works closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement, service charities and the Ministry of Defence, and is managed by the Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT) programme.

The NHS is committed to the Armed Forces Covenant, which is a promise ensuring that those who serve or who have served in the UK Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly. The Armed Forces Covenant has two key principles: 1. The Armed Forces community should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. 2. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for
those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved. The NHS always prioritises people with the most urgent clinical need first, but after that should ensure that armed forces service related injuries receive timely treatment.

There were an estimated 2.17 million military veterans in England in 2015, making up between 3% and 9% of the population (depending on the area). 40.1% of veterans report at least one long-term health condition. The most prevalent issues reported among veterans are musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, respiratory and mental health conditions.

In addition to their work for veterans, reservists and forces families as patients, Veteran Aware hospitals and Trusts are working with the existing initiatives Step Into Health and the Employer Recognition Scheme to ensure that NHS organisations are ‘forces friendly’ employers.